

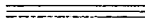
A

***DISCUSSION
GUIDE***

to

William Irvine's

***"Is Socialism
the Answer?"***



by

Carlyle King





A DISCUSSION GUIDE

to

WILLIAM IRVINE'S IS SOCIALISM THE ANSWER?

**prepared by
CARLYLE KING**

This booklet may be considered under the following main divisions:

- I. What Is Capitalism? 4-28.
- II. What the People Need. 29-36.
- III. What Is Socialism? 36-50.
- IV. Socialism and the Worker. 51-64.
- V. Socialism and the Farmer. 65-77.
- VI. Towards the Future. 78-95.

(Numbers throughout refer to pages of **IS SOCIALISM THE ANSWER?**)

I. What Is Capitalism? 4-28

This section of the booklet is given to a description of the present economic system, commonly called capitalism but sometimes referred to as the "free enterprise system." The author first discusses five main ways in which this system wastes our natural, mechanical, and human resources: 1. destruction of wild life, soil, forests, etc.; 2. destruction of goods produced; 3. restriction of production; 4. unemployment; 5. unnecessary accident and ill-health. Examine these five sources of waste in turn, and from your own experience and knowledge give examples of each.

What is the purpose of this economic system? (13-14).
What should be the purpose of a good economic system?

Next the author deals with the effects of the economic system on the people who live under it. He mentions insecurity, mental illness, ugliness of homes and surroundings, inefficiency, and disease. Can you give examples of each of these effects from your own knowledge and experience?

He believes also that our system promotes crime, war, racketeering, and frauds. Do you agree? Can you explain and illustrate? Who benefits from advertising? Who pays for it? Has capitalism failed?

Further Reading

Lewis & Scott, *Make This Your Canada*, Chapters 3, 4.
Stuart Chase, *The Road We Are Travelling*, 1914-42.
John Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*.
(Part I).

II. What the People Need. 29-36

In the first section of the booklet the author tells us what we actually get under capitalism. Here he tells us what we ought to get. He lists **eight basic needs** of the people. What are they? Do you agree that these are all basic? Are there others you would add to the list as equally basic?

Is there or has there been a food surplus in the world? Is there or has there been malnutrition in your district? What is the housing situation in your locality? What free medical services are available in your district or province? What provisions for the physically and mentally disabled are made in your province? What percentage of the children in your neighborhood secure a high school education? What recreational facilities are freely available in your locality?

Can we afford to provide for the eight basic needs listed in this section? From what?

Further Reading

Ontario C.C.F., *Planning for Freedom*.
League for Industrial Democracy, *Postwar Planning for Peace and Full Employment*.
Stuart Chase, *Goals for America*.

III. What Is Socialism? 36-50

Definition 36-43

What is the difference between genuine socialism and "national" socialism in regard to (1) function and power of the state, (2) freedom of the press, (3) class distinctions, (4) position of women, (5) growth of empires, (6) war? (p. 43).

Capital 44-45

What is capital? Where does it come from? Who has it now? How is it used? Under socialism who would own it, and how would it be used?

Property 46

Distinguish between public property and private property. Give half a dozen examples of each. What will happen to public property under socialism? What will happen to private property under socialism?

Regimentation 46-47

What is regimentation? Give some examples of what you understand by the word. What is the opposite of regimentation? Are people in Canada regimented now in any way? If so, how are they regimented, and is this good or bad for them? What would be the possible sources of regimentation under socialism? If you think these are bad, could they be avoided? How?

Bureaucracy 47-9

What do people fear when they talk of the evils of bureaucracy? Is there a real danger of it under socialism? What degree of central control would be necessary under socialism? How much could be left to local management? Apply your distinction to transportation, electrical power production and distribution, textile manufacturing, mining, agriculture. Can you make economic planning democratic and decentralized? How? Take some industry for an example and explain.

Incentive 49-51

To what extent have people scope for the exercise of initiative, self-reliance, and ambition under the present economic system? How many have this scope? How do they get it, or what limits them? In what ways could initiative, self-reliance, and ambition be exercised under socialism? Illustrate by reference to the work of a miner, a stenographer, a bookkeeper, a plumber, a teacher, a technician.

Further Reading

**John Strachey, Why You Should Be a Socialist.
Carlyle King, What is Democratic Socialism?
L. Wasserman, Modern Political Philosophies.**

IV. Socialism and the Worker. 51-64

The Philadelphia Charter 51-4

Consider the program listed on the latter half of page 53. What would you select as the three most important items in that program? Explain your choice. To what extent does the list include the needs and objectives of a good social system which we saw in Part II above (29-36)?

Notice that Governments and employers have agreed to this program. Check the items from "a" to "j" (53-4) which you feel that the Canadian government is making a reasonably good effort to realize. What's the score? What about Canadian employers in general? How do they score? (6 out of 10 is a pass mark on this test!)

Notice (paragraph 2, p. 53) that the foregoing principles are said to apply not just to people with white skins, or to North Americans, or to self-governing nations, but to all peoples everywhere, irrespective of race, color, creed, or state of political advancement.

Unions 54

What is the function of a labor union in capitalist society? What good does a labor union accomplish? What are the limitations of a labor union in our present society? To what extent do the objectives of a labor union parallel those of socialism?

Labor's Program 56

Study the program of the C.C.L. on pages 56-58. Which items in the list parallel the program of the Philadelphia Charter (53-4)? Which items in the list would you call distinctively socialist measures? Which items definitely imply over-all economic planning? Which items specifically safeguard democratic liberties or extend democratic procedures?

Compare proposals of the T.L.C. (p. 59) with those of the C.C.L. Make a list of points where they are substantially in agreement. Make a list of the chief differences. Discuss the differences and decide which, if any, of these you would add to your list of desirable measures.

"Unless the workers in industry are permitted to share in policy making and in management, there can be no basic democracy and there can be no true liberty." Discuss this statement.

If you agree with it, how can labor participation in management and policy-making be realized?

What does the worker stand to gain under socialism? Under socialism, what would be the function of labor unions?

Political Action 63

How do legislative acts affect the welfare of labor unions? Give examples. Can labor's program as described 56-60 be realized under capitalism? Can a worker logically vote for the political parties of capitalism?

Further Reading

James Myers, Do You Know Labor?

J. L. Cohen, Collective Bargaining in Canada.

Canadian Congress of Labor, Reconstruction, the First Steps.

V. Socialism and the Farmer. 65-77

The Life of the Farmer 65

"Division between country and city still exists." Why? What misunderstandings does the farmer have about the life of the worker in the city? What misunderstandings has the worker about the life of the farmer? What difficulties have they in common? What interests?

In what ways does a farmer differ from a capitalist? (67). What are the chief handicaps to good living conditions in rural Canada? (68).

Co-operatives 69

How many kinds of co-operatives are there in your district? What percentage of the population are members of these co-ops? What percentage of the business in your locality do these co-ops handle? What is the fundamental economic purpose of a co-op? (70). Who may join a co-op? What is the principle of government in a co-operative? What is the attitude of co-operatives to trade unionism and labor organizations?

What do you consider the three most basic differences between a co-operative and a joint stock corporation? (See list p. 71).

Socialism and Co-ops 72

Compare the main principles of the co-operative movement

with the main principles of socialism. What would be the place of co-operatives in a fully socialist society? What would be the advantages to a farmer of a socialist government? (73-4).

Co-operative Farming 74-77

What are the advantages of co-operative farming? Discuss its feasibility in your district. What are the chief obstacles or difficulties to be overcome?

Further Reading

Wartime Information Board, *People on the Land*.

Canadian Federation of Agriculture, *Postwar Reconstruction for Agriculture*.

Ainslie Kerr, *Canada's Co-ops*.

VI. Towards the Future. 78-95

War and Postwar

How does war solve the economic problems of capitalism? How can we best provide for the war veteran? What is a socialist policy of rehabilitation for war veterans? (82-4).

In what way can misunderstanding arise between war veteran and worker? How can we prevent it?

What steps can worker, farmer, veteran take now to prevent the recurrence of war?

Christianity and the Social Order 87-9

In what ways does capitalism frustrate Christian living? In what ways will socialism help to realize Christian principles? What is the church's place in the struggle to achieve a good social order?

Beyond our Boundaries 89-95

Name the countries of Europe in which there has been an advance towards socialism since the War. Review the progress each has made to date. How can we help them?

Further Reading

Province of Saskatchewan, *Community Meets Veteran*.
(Study booklet.)

E. F. Tittle, *Christians in an Unchristian Society*.

H. Freeman (ed.), *Peace is the Victory*.